

Best Toys for School Readiness

Did you know that over 85% of a child's brain develops before the age of 5? From the time a baby is born, their brain begins learning important skills that are needed for future school success. These skills are best learned through play experiences. Parents can help maximize early learning by choosing toys that encourage active play and higher level thinking.

But what kinds of toys are best to help develop school readiness skills? Smart Beginnings has great suggestions for toys that are not only fun, but will help your child be ready for school and ready for life!

If you want to develop early math skills... choose toys that help a child understand numbers, patterns, sizes and shapes, such as puzzles, building toys (wood blocks, legos, etc.), wooden train sets, stacking cups, matching card games and simple number board games.

If you want to develop early communication skills ... choose toys that encourage children to talk and make up their own stories, such as dress up clothes, puppets, pretend phones, play kitchens, toy animals, dolls and action figures. (However, avoid toys that "talk" for your child!) Toys that can be used to draw or write, like magna doodles or sidewalk chalk, are also great for encouraging early writing skills.

If you want to develop early creativity... choose toys that can be used in many different ways and allow children to express themselves individually such as, art materials (crayons, paper, markers, paints, glue), painting sets, playdough, and musical instruments.

If you want to develop early science & social studies skills..... choose realistic toys that help a child better understand the world, such as binoculars, bug jars, magnify glasses, flashlights, globes, realistic animal toys and people that represent diversity.

As a general rule, avoid having too many battery operated toys with flashy sounds and lights. These types of toys are typically more entertaining, than educational and don't support early brain development.

For more information about how you can help your child be ready for school and ready for life, visit our website.... www.smartbeginningsroanoke.org

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United Way of Roanoke Valley advances the common good in the Roanoke Valley by investing in the building blocks of a good life: EDUCATION, INCOME AND HEALTH! Your gifts to the United Way Impact Fund allow us to work with school readiness partners like Smart Beginnings to:

- Increase access to affordable, quality childcare;
- Equip parents to help children be ready for and to succeed in school; and
- Increase public awareness and support for investing early.

Learn how you can make a difference to thousands of people in the Roanoke Valley everyday visit www.uwrv.org.